1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

159 and five children, two from the first wife and three from the second and we are living happily.

MOTIRAM: A KOL WHO BECAME A PROSPEROUS FARMER

I was born in Kotmi (in North East Central Provinces near Pendra). My grandfather came to Kotmi from a place in Rewa State and when he arrived here he had with him my father who was still just a boy. My father was a hard working man and when his father died he had to shift for himself and found work as a coolie wherever he could find employment. Finally he got together enough money to be able to purchase the right to farm a small bit of land. This land was obtained from the *malguzar* who was very kind to him. When I was still a very small boy and not long after we got this land my grandmother, who had lived to a ripe old age, died happily for she saw my father established on a piece of land he could call his own. My father had two brothers who also owned a share of the land and [428] helped start the farming, but both of them died without issue, leaving the control of the land with us alone. As soon as I was old enough to work I would go out with my father to tend the cattle in the forests. Later on I went by myself. When I was about twenty years of age my father died, but I had been married before that and I began to control the land and care for it.

I am now quite independent and all along have never had to work as a coolie for another person. I am very proud of this fact. I even hire other people to work for me for I now have twenty-two acres of land with a good house of thick mud walls upon it and cattle [651] sheds as well. I have about thirty animals: goats, cows and bullocks. I pay a yearly land tax to the *malguzar* of Rs. 9, and a tax on my carts and animals which amounts to Rs. 7 per year.

My family consists of four sons and one daughter. Two sons and one daughter are now married and live here in the same home with [871] me. They help me care for the fields and crops. A younger son goes regularly to the Mission School in Kotmi and studies in the third Hindi [481] class. I am glad that this son can get an education and I pay the regular fees for him. He is very clever, walks two miles to school and is very regular in his attendance.

Although I have always had money for our food and have never suffered that way, still we have suffered much through illnesses and death. We go often to the Mission dispensary in Kotmi for our [165 163] medicines. My first wife died but not before giving birth to seven

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

children, three of whom are now dead. They died of fevers and smallpox. I was married a second time and this wife has had but one child—the boy who is now going to school.

People around here count me one of the rich and well-to-do farmers of Kotmi, even though I am now only 35 years of age. I am now engaged in a controversy over a piece of land and the *panch* has not been able to settle it to my satisfaction. I have threatened to take the matter to court and I hope the *panch* will do the right thing.

Phaggu: A Kol who Returned to the Old Paths[1]

My father was born in Barela and he held a few acres of land and farmed them and gained sufficient wealth to make us independent. He had nine children, five of them were boys and four were girls. Two of the sisters are now living, while two are dead. The time came when my father could not profitably farm his land so a Mohammedan of influence bought the field and father worked for him in the same field for forty or forty-five years. My elder brother is working as a factory coolie in Jubbulpore and I work as a coolie in Barela.

I too was born here in Barela. My father died when I was about thirty years of age. I did not get any share of my father's property, for when he died I was not at home but in Nagpur. I lived at home with my father for eighteen years and was then married. I started to school, but could not continue to study because the school master used to punish his students very much and once when he tried to punish me I tripped him up and he fell and hurt his head. I was then in the first Hindi. This was during the great famine.

By the grace of Narayan we did not die of hunger during this awful famine, for we had enough to eat, especially those first eighteen years when I never thought of hard work such as coolie work. When I was eighteen I took a rupee from father and set off for Nagpur and travelled without a ticket all the day. I would get off the train at every station and as the train started I used to get in another compartment. Thus I reached Balaghat and got a job in the Manganese mines where I worked for about ten years. I could not earn anything there except enough to feed me:

Jahan jao bhag,
Wahan lage Ag.
Age Age sab Sanichar ja raha hai
Tu kahan jā raha hai?

1. See Frontispiece and plate XXVII.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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[539]

Wherever thou goest
There a fire flares up.
You are haunted by Saturn (ill luck)
So where art thou going?

This verse sums up the story of my life.

When I was in Balaghat I did not marry. I left work there and went on foot to Sukari to see my sister and stayed there for eight years. In Gondia I kept a woman with me, but did not marry her, and had [836 848] two children by her. From Sukari the four of us came by foot to Padriganj and from there bought tickets to return to Barela. We had but little money in hand, and although all our relatives were living together in Barela they would not take me back and I had to build a separate hut.

When I was ten or twelve years old I worked in the fort (Gun Carriage Factory, Jubbulpore) when its foundations were being built and for two years received four annas a day. Carrying dirt was my work at that time.

Just now, sir, I am very thin but before this I was very healthy and strong. Now I am working as a coolie and am settled here and hope never to leave Barela again. The woman I took to live with [163] me in Gondia is still with me and altogether she has given birth to seven children, five of them having died, two when they were quite old. My son is sick and often has fits.

[262] I have had a hard time in life. I have had no food and ate bread made of mango kernels and the flowers of the *semal* tree. And many other things which the ordinary man never eats. At the time of the great famine this was my lot. Rice was then four annas a seer, and we could not afford it. A few months ago I was very ill and we had [758] no money so my wife had to get roots and leaves from the jungle. When I am sick I am not able to work and we all suffer. I am ashamed to ask for help from any one. Three years ago we were both very ill and we simply closed the door and remained inside. Our relatives [602] didn't help us with either food or money, but both of us recovered.

[426] I have a debt of about Rs. 4 or 5 but never in my life have I taken a large loan. I never drink wine except when invited to some wedding festivities. I am not in this habit and know that it is not good to drink liquor. I don't know the disadvantages of drink because I don't drink. Of course this I know, that if you are intoxicated then anyone may come, kick you and rob you of what you may have on your person. There is loss of money too. The same money can be